



Government Office Building  
9830 Patuxent Woods Dr.  
Columbia, MD 21046

## MINUTES

Thursday, 06 February 2020

### ATTENDANCE:

**Members Present:** Mr. J. Greg Jolissaint, Mr. Jonathan K. Branch, Ms. Jennifer Anthony, Mr. Michael Blum, Mr. Steven M. Bolen, Ms. Kelly Kesler, Mr. Robert Lowell, Mr. Keith McGuire, Mr. Bob Moore, and Mr. Paul Rivers.

**Members Excused:** Mr. Reginald Avery and Ms. Nafrettifi Griffin.

**Members Absent:** Mr. Michael Griggs.

**Howard County Government Officials in Attendance:** Ms. Lisa Terry (Manager, Howard County Office of Veterans and Military Families).

**Special Guest(s):** None.

**Others in Attendance:** Mr. Obie Chinemere (Baltimore Regional Director, U.S. Senator Van Hollen's Office), Mr. Tom Glen (A.L. Post 156), Mr. Reed Kohberger, Mr. Yale Stenzler, Ms. Liesele Wood, Mr. Chris Yates, Mr. Ed A. Hall (Chair, Joint Military Council), Mr. Tim Ruland (A.L. Post 156), Mr. Bob Pelletier (VFW Post 7472/A.L. Post 156), Mr. John Way (The VA Way), Mr. Vance Blakely (A.L. Post 156), Mr. Robert Berlett (A.L. Post 300), and Mr. Lou Schott (A.L. Post 156).

### MEETING SUMMARY:

1900 hrs Mr. J. Greg Jolissaint, Chair, Howard County Commission for Veterans and Military Families (HCCVMF), presiding, opened the meeting.

- I. The Role was taken: Ten Commission members being in attendance, Mr. Jolissaint declared the Commission was in quorum and brought the meeting to order.



- II. Mr. Jolissaint acknowledged the attendance of key Commission personnel: Ms. Lisa Terry, Manager, Howard County Office of Veterans and Military Families and Mr. Ed A. Hall, Chair, Howard County Joint Military Council (JMC).
- III. Mr. Jolissaint stated that he would be leaving the meeting early and at such time would turn the proceedings over to Mr. Branch, Co-Chair, HCCVMF.

**1. Consideration of the 02 January Meeting Minutes**

- a. Mr. Jolissaint entered the 02 JAN 2020 Commission minutes onto the table and opened the table for discussion. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. A motion and second to the motion were made. Mr. Jolissaint called for a vote and the minutes were approved by voice vote. Subsequently, Mr. Jolissaint directed that the 02 JAN 2020 Commission minutes be entered into the official record and it was so done.

**2. Presentation by Special Guests**

None.

**3. Old Business**

- a. Update on Commission Vacancies: Ms. Terry stated that by favorable vote of the Howard County Council Ms. Nafrettifi D. Griffin was appointed to the Howard County Commission for Veterans and Military Families on 02 February 2020. (Reference HoCo CR5-2020.) (WELCOME ABOARD!). She further stated that the Commission is now fully staffed with thirteen commissioners.
- b. Update on the Veterans Day Parade: Mr. Jolissaint stated that the Columbia Association will continue to discuss how to improve the Veterans Day Parade event. One item for consideration is to shorten the time between the end of the march and the start of post-parade ceremonies. He also stated that it is anticipated that there will be more development along the parade route next year that could affect the march and logistics.
- c. Feedback on Veterans Legislative Summit: Mr. Bolen summarized the activities of the Maryland General Assembly Veterans Caucus held on 11 December 2019. (See attachment A.)
- d. Feedback on MDVA Joint Veterans Commission Summit: Ms. Terry stated that the summit brought together the four Maryland state commissions concerning veterans as well as



representatives from county commissions and veterans groups. She noted that each county shared best practices and that “power partnerships” with libraries, vets-in-school programs, mental health programs, and other organizations make outreach to veterans stronger.

- e. Feedback on Bright Minds/HoCo School Breakfast: On 16 January, Mr. Moore and Ms. Terry stated that they joined other members of the Commission and local VSO’s who attended the “State of the Howard County Public School System” hosted by the Bright Minds Foundation.

The Bright Minds Foundation provides critical support through grants and scholarships for programs and services to benefit students, teachers, families, and the community that would otherwise not be available in the system’s budget. Ms. Terry stated that among the programs they offer are: Student Support for JUMPSTART, Read With Me Howard County, and Computers for Students.

Mr. Blum asked how the Foundation is funded. Ms. Terry stated that most of their funding is through private donations and grants.

- f. Feedback on VAMHCS: Mr. Bolen summarized the meeting of the Veterans Affairs Maryland Health Care System held on 15 January 2020. (See attachment B.)
- g. Feedback on Anne Arundel County Veterans Leadership Meeting: Mr. Way summarized the leadership meeting. He stated that there was a recognition that more needs to be done to build an “ecosystem” of resources across Maryland counties and to help homeless veterans. He also stated that the TAP (Transition Assistance Program) program needs to be improved to better help service members transition into civilian life.
- h. Update on the HoCo Veterans Resource Fair: Ms. Terry stated that the Fair is scheduled for Tuesday, 21 April. The Fair will be held at the Howard County Community College (HCCC) Galleria. She is planning to conduct a walk-through of the venue with HCCC officials next week. Ms. Terry further stated that she was looking into providing break-out areas to hold mental health first aid and NARCAN training, lectures on living with chronic disease, and on providing an overview of VA benefits. She is working with a veteran-owned urgent care provider to perform onsite wellness checks and with a veteran-owned small business to cater the event. She is also trying to secure a keynote speaker.
- i. Update on HCCVMF Annual Report: Ms. Terry stated that the final draft of the Annual Report was finished and asked the Commissioners to provide feedback by noon Friday (2/7).
- j. Update on Securing a Veterans Home in HoCo or MoCo: Mr. Branch opened the discussion on whether the Commission should support a petition to the Maryland Department of



Veterans Affairs to build a veterans home in Howard County or to support building a home in Montgomery County. Ms. Terry stated that if the Commission decides to support a petition it will need authorization from the County before it can move forward.

Several Commissioners had questions about the cost of building a home, who would shoulder the cost, how the land would be acquired, and where the home could be built here in Howard County, etc. versus supporting construction of a home in Montgomery County.

Mr. Blum expressed interest in looking into building a home in Howard County. Mr. Blum and other Commissioners expressed support for forming a committee to investigate what it would take to build a veterans home in the County.

Mr. Branch asked if there was a motion to form a committee to investigate the cost and feasibility of building a veterans home in Howard County. A motion and second to the motion were made to establish a "Committee to Investigate the Feasibility of Building a Veterans Home in Howard County." Mr. Branch called for a vote on the motion which was adopted by voice vote.

It was further established that the following Commissioners would serve on the Committee: Mr. Blum (chair), Ms. Anthony, Ms. Kesler, and Mr. Moore.

#### **4. New Business**

- a. Veterans Foundation Monument: Ms. Terry stated that the Howard County Veterans Foundation had determined a preliminary design for a monument to be built on the future site of the Neighborhood Square currently under construction in Columbia. The Foundation will be soliciting input and feedback on the design from County residents over the next few weeks. The Foundation will present its design to local veterans on Thursday, 20 February at the Yingling-Ridgely VFW & Auxiliary Post 7472.
- b. Update on Veterans Day in Schools Program: Mr. Moore stated that the Commission has presentations available for anyone that is asked to speak at a school. Ms. Terry and Ms. Kesler talked about the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Simulated Congressional Hearings for 5<sup>th</sup> graders and urged Commissioners and guests to volunteer for this program. Mr. Hall stated that Commissioners and guests should become familiar with the Vets-in-School program and get more involved.
- c. Howard County Joint Military Council (JMC) Significant Items: Mr. Hall briefed the Commission on the following:



- 1) The American Legion is sponsoring young men who are rising seniors in high school to attend “Boys State” at McDaniel College in Westminster, 21 - 26 June 2020. This program is free-of-charge to those who attend. (THANK YOU A.L. FOR PROVIDING FUNDING FOR THIS!) Boys State is a program that teaches young men about the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship.
  - 2) Veteran Friendly Business is all over Maryland and now includes first responders.
  - 3) The Flag Retirement Ceremony has been standardized and is set for the third Saturday of each calendar quarter. The next ceremony will be held on 18 April at the Ellicott City American Legion Post 156. Flag retirement preparation will take place from 0830 - 1100 hours followed by a class on flag etiquette from 1100 - 1130 hours. Retirement will take place at 1200 hours.
  - 4) The JMC joint calendar will be up and running soon. They will use Ms. Terry’s calendar as the main platform.
- d. Update on the Veterans Support Group: Ms. Terry attended the meeting with other Commissioners and VSO personnel. She stated that the group needs certified facilitators to conduct the sessions with trained therapists and social workers nearby to act in a supporting role. The group also needs an organization to take ownership of the activities. Ms. Kesler stated that there might be several organizations willing to take ownership. Mr. Rivers stated that a location needs to be found and that the word needs to get out to veterans about this resource. He also noted that the group should give veterans activities to focus on to fill the “space” when they get home.

## 5. Future Business

- a. Question: Should the Commission hold or cancel meetings in April or May?

Mr. Branch called for a discussion on holding or canceling meetings in April or May. After discussion, Mr. Branch called for a motion to hold the April meeting and to cancel the May meeting. A motion and second were made. Mr. Branch called for a vote on the motion which was adopted by voice vote. (NOTE: The May meeting is cancelled.)

- b. Question: Should the Commission break for two months or one month over the summer recess?

Mr. Branch called for a discussion on holding a break over the summer recess for two months or for one month. After discussion, Mr. Branch called for a motion to hold a break



for two months (as is current practice). A motion and second were made. Mr. Branch called for a vote on the motion which was adopted by voice vote. (NOTE: The Commission will continue to stand adjourned for two months over the summer recess - July and August.)

**6. Next Commission Meeting Date(s)**

- a) Mr. Branch announced that the next meeting of the Howard County Commission for Veterans and Military Families will be held on Thursday, 05 March 2020 starting at 1900 hours in the Government Office Building, 9830 Patuxent Woods Dr., Columbia, MD 21046.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

2038 hrs Mr. Branch called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion and second to the motion were made. Subsequent to the motions for adjournment, Mr. Branch closed the meeting and directed the Commission to stand in adjournment until 05 March 2020.

Minutes were drafted by: Mr. Steven M. Bolen

J. Greg Jolissaint  
Chair

J. Branch  
Co-Chair

**Notes:**

None

**Attachments:**

A) Meeting Notes: Maryland State General Assembly Veterans Caucus; 11 December 2019

B) Meeting Notes: VAMHCS VSO & CS Stakeholders Meeting; 15 January 2020.



## **ATTACHMENT A**

Meeting Notes:

Maryland State General Assembly Veterans Caucus

11 December 2019

**Maryland State General Assembly  
Veterans Caucus**

Miller Senate Office Building - West  
Annapolis, Maryland

11 December 2019

**0900 hrs.      The meeting was called to order.**

Presiding officers and introductions by:

MD Senator Will Smith (D - D20), Senate Chair  
MD Senator Jack Bailey (R - D29), Senate Co-Chair  
MD Delegate C. T. Wilson (D - D28), House Chair  
MD Delegate Pat Young (D - D44B), House Co-Chair

Remarks:

Mr. Bob Finn, Deputy Secretary of Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA)

- The VA is looking at opening Veterans Homes in Rockville and Sykesville.
- The VA is acquiring land to accommodate future expansion of the national cemeteries.
- The Veterans Trust Fund is intended to help veterans overcome an unforeseen situation causing a short-term financial emergency or hardship. In Maryland, the fund is mostly used for assistance with rent/mortgage and utilities.

Ms. Dana Burl, Director, Outreach and Advocacy Program, MDVA

- The Outreach and Advocacy Program's mission is to develop innovative ways to inform Maryland veterans about benefits and services available to them.
- The Department has an electronic newsletter, hosts a website ([www.veterans.maryland.gov](http://www.veterans.maryland.gov)), and sends "Welcome Home Veteran" informational packets to Maryland veterans returning home.

Adjunct General Gowen

- Major General Timothy E. Gowen was appointed as the 30th Adjutant General of Maryland effective, September 1, 2019.



- The Adjutant General is responsible for the daily operations of the Maryland Military Department, which includes the Maryland Army National Guard, Maryland Air National Guard, Maryland Emergency Management Agency, and Maryland Defense Force.
- He is a senior advisor to the governor and is responsible for the readiness, administration, and training of more than 6,700 members of the Military Department.
- He serves as the official channel of communication between the governor and the National Guard Bureau and is a member of the governor's cabinet.

#### Veterans Focus Groups:

The Caucus was divided into three focus groups to discuss veterans' issues and possible legislation for the General Assembly. The groups were: (A) Disability & Mental Health Services for Veterans, (B) Veteran-Owned Businesses, and (C) Veterans Education, Higher Education, and Reintegration.

*(Note, I attended group (A)).*

#### Notes for Group (A):

- Several issues were discussed in the group to help veterans. The top issues discussed were: offering support for mental health first aid, suicide prevention, opioid addiction, and adding veterans' courts to more municipalities across Maryland.
- Other issues discussed were providing financial support for the use of cannabis, getting information out to veterans to let them know about benefits and resources available to them, increased support for service-animal programs, and providing support to family members coping with soldiers returning home who have cognitive and physical disabilities and addictions.

#### Presentation and Discussion of Legislative Initiatives by Attendees:

#### Notes from Group (B):

- Issues discussed in group (B) were: allowing tax breaks to veteran-owned startup businesses (at least for the first two years of operation), providing mentoring/coaching to veteran entrepreneurs, encouraging/alerting veterans to take advantage of the 1% procurement contracts mandated for certified veteran-owned small business enterprises (VSBE) - Maryland is currently not meeting this goal, and providing more help to veterans to get VSBE certified.

Notes from Group (C):

- Issues discussed in group (C) were: getting information out to veterans to let them know about benefits and resources available to them, working with State institutions of higher learning to help veterans suffering with mental health issues (like PTSD) integrate into the full student “learning” experience, provide tutoring (on campus and off), provide family support (e.g. child care), provide transportation to campus, and better track veterans’ matriculation metrics.

Setting for the 2020 Veterans Caucus Agenda: TBD date/time for follow-up to this forum.

**1100 hrs.      Adjournment**

Notes taken by: Mr. Steven M. Bolen



## **ATTACHMENT B**

Meeting Notes:  
VAMHCS VSO & CS Stakeholders Meeting  
15 January 2020

## **Veterans Service Organization (VSO) & Congressional Stakeholders (CS) Meeting**

VA Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS)  
Baltimore VA Medical Center  
Multipurpose Room, 3A-300  
10 North Greene Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

15 January 2020

**1102 hrs Dr. Adam M. Robison, Director VAMHCS, presiding, brought the meeting to order.**

### VAMHCS Updates

- 1) Dr. Robinson stated that approximately 7,000 new veterans were enrolled in the healthcare clinic in 2019. This is up 2% from 2018.
- 2) Dr. Robinson stated that The VA is performing research into common issues associated with diabetes such as peripheral neuropathy. This research has been published in recent scholarly papers.
- 3) On 1 January, the VA began processing claims under the 2019 “Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act.”

Veterans who served as far as 12 nautical miles offshore from Vietnam between January 6, 1962, and May 7, 1975, as well as those who served in the Korean demilitarized zone between January 1, 1967, and August 31, 1971, can apply for compensation if they have developed one of 14 conditions.

### VAMHCS Clinical Updates

- 4) Flu season is here! The VA is partnering with Walgreens to provide no-cost quadrivalent flu shots to enrolled veterans of the VA healthcare system. The program runs from August 15, 2019 to March 31, 2020.

### VBA Updates

- 5) The first “Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act” claim was made out of the VA Manila Regional Office.

Veterans with questions about benefits or filing a claim can visit the [VA Agent Orange website](#) and [Compensation for Surviving Spouse and Dependents \(DIC\) website](#). They can also call 1-800-749-8387.

### National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Update

- 6) Wreaths Across America will be performing a post-holiday cleanup on Friday, January 17 from 0800 - 1100 hours at Baltimore National Cemetery and on Saturday, January 18 from 0800 - 0930 hours at Annapolis National Cemetery. Over 9,000 wreaths were laid at the Baltimore National Cemetery that has about 37,000 markers.

### MyVA

- 7) The Chesapeake Veterans Alliance is planning to hold a benefit claims clinic and resource fair at Carroll County Community College on March 19 from 1000 to 1300 hours.

### Endocrine Weight Loss Program

- 8) The VA has a lifestyle program called "MOVE!" that helps veterans with their weight management. The program encourages healthy eating behavior and increased physical activity based on the latest nutritional science. Veterans can learn more about how MOVE! has helped thousands of veterans achieve their weight management goals here: [MOVE! Success Stories](#).

Dr. Robinson reminded us that weight management is not just a cosmetic issue but also a real health issue, too.

### Care in the Community/Mission Act

- 9) The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is continuing to shift from the Patient-Centered Community Care (PC3) program to the Community Care Network (CCN) across the country.

### Homeless & Veteran Court Update

- 10) The VA Baltimore Regional Office is in "Code Blue" season. Cold Blue is declared when windchill temperatures are expected to drop below 13 degrees (F). There has been one Cold Blue day so far in January - more are expected through February and March. Homeless veterans are welcomed to stay the night in the lobby of the VAMHCS until normal business hours.

Next meeting: 19 February, 1100 hrs, VAMHCS, Baltimore VA Medical Center, Rm. 3A-300.

**1222 hrs Dr. Adam M. Robison adjourned the meeting.**

Notes taken (via dial-in) by: Mr. Steven M. Bolen